

## **HOUSING PARTNERSHIP/ FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE**

Fiscal Year 2008

The Housing Partnership/ Fair Housing Committee has continued to be involved in many aspects of affordable housing both in Amherst and in the wider area. Two members were involved in the working groups that comprised the Pioneer Valley initiative to end homelessness in our area within ten years. The completed plan entitled All Roads Lead to Home advocates for a "Housing First" approach. One of the strategies outlined in the study which impacts the committee's and Town's efforts is to increase the housing stock available for people at or below 30% of the area medium income, a scarce commodity in Amherst.

Members of the Partnership attended a variety of meetings and conferences including an all day meeting that focused on use of Community Preservation Act money in developing affordable housing. These meetings provided an opportunity for members to become acquainted with Partnership members from other towns. The result was a lively meeting with members from Northampton, which we hosted in the Ann Whalen Community Room. Our discussion of common interests and challenges as well as our different outcomes and approaches led us to commit to another joint meeting.

Much of our attention this year was aimed at the goal of establishing a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust for Amherst. The goal we have set after many hours of research and discussion is to present a warrant article to the Fall Town Meeting. We have met with Shirin Everett from Kopelman and Paige to increase our awareness and to answer our questions and concerns about a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust. Town Manager, Larry Shaffer has been very supportive of our effort. We met with business people to encourage their support and we will have a public meeting in late September.

Our other main objective is to see the development of homes on the land on Olympia Drive. The committee was able to define what kind of housing we would like to see and a Request for Proposals is being finalized by Shirin Everett to reflect those preferences. A public meeting will be held for the RFP also in late September. A major stumbling block continues to be access by road to the property on Olympia Drive.

We have continued to meet with developers who are building or who are interested in building affordable housing and to be aware of property that could be potential opportunities for construction of affordable housing.

Sadly this year we lost a valuable member, Frank Wells, who was committed to providing affordable housing to everyone.